

IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and listings.

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus comprising:

a) ~~input~~ inputting means for inputting image ~~data~~ data of plural objects;

b) encoding means for encoding, with encoding conditions, the image data inputted by said ~~input~~ inputting means, on an object basis; and

Al c) control means for setting a priority order of code amount allocation for each of the objects and in accordance with ~~said~~ the priority order, controlling the encoding conditions for each of the objects in said encoding means; object having a predetermined priority order, when a total code amount obtained by encoding the image data of the plural objects exceeds a predetermined code amount

~~wherein said control means controls the encoding conditions in said encoding means so that a total code amount obtained by encoding the image data of said plural objects does not exceed a predetermined code amount.~~

2. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said control means changes ~~said~~ the priority order at a predetermined timing.

3. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein ~~said~~ the predetermined timing is determined according to how many times a code amount

reduction processing for ~~said~~ the objects is executed or according to code amounts of ~~said~~ the objects.

4. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein, when the code amount of an object set to a lowest priority becomes smaller than a predetermined lower limit value, said control means sets an other object to the lowest priority.

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5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encoding means breaks down the image data of ~~said~~ the objects at least into pixel data and shape data and encodes the pixel data and the shape data, and said control means determines ~~said~~ the priority order in accordance with a size of shape data of ~~said~~ the objects.

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encoding means executes the encoding operation in accordance with MPEG-4, and said control means determines ~~said~~ the priority order in accordance with ~~the~~ sizes of bounding boxes of ~~said~~ the objects.

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encoding means includes quantization means for quantizing the image data of ~~said~~ the objects, and quantization parameters of said quantization means are controlled by ~~said~~ the encoding conditions.

8. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising recording means for recording the data encoded by said encoding means into a recording medium.

9. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said ~~input~~ inputting means comprises image pickup means for photographing an object image and generating image data.

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10. (Original) A video camera provided with the image processing apparatus according to claim 1.

11. (Currently Amended) An image processing method comprising the steps of:

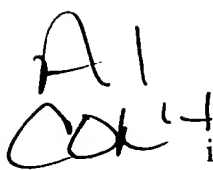
- a) inputting image data of plural objects;
- b) encoding, with encoding conditions, the inputted image data inputted in said inputting step, on an object basis; and
- c) setting a priority order of code amount allocation for each of the objects and, in accordance with said priority order, controlling the encoding conditions for each of the objects in said encoding step, object having a predetermined priority order, when a total code amount obtained by encoding the image data of the plural objects exceeds a predetermined code amount

~~wherein, in said controlling step, the encoding conditions in said encoding~~

~~step are controlled so that a total code amount obtained by encoding the image data of said plural objects does not exceed a predetermined code amount.~~

12. (Currently Amended) A storage medium for storing program codes of encoding steps, said encoding steps comprising:

- a) an inputting step₁ of inputting image data of plural objects;
- b) an encoding step₁ of encoding₁ with encoding conditions, the

 inputted image data on an object basis; and,

- c) a controlling step₁ of setting a priority order of code amount allocation for each of the objects and, in accordance with ~~said~~ the priority order, controlling the encoding conditions for each of the objects in said encoding step, object having a predetermined priority order, when a total code amount obtained by encoding the image data of the plural objects exceeds a predetermined code amount

~~wherein, in said controlling step, the encoding conditions in said encoding step are controlled so that a total code amount obtained by encoding the image data of said plural objects does not exceed a predetermined code amount.~~